

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 ARAE-00 /051 W

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O 152000Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9480

USCOMSOLANT NIACT IMMEDIATE

CINCLANTFLT NORFOLK NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO CNO WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USDAO CARACAS IMMEDIATE

USDAO BRASILIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1840

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, TD, US

SUBJECT: TRINIDAD GOVERNMENT CANCELS PERMISSION FOR UNITAS
FLEET VISIT

REF: (A) PORT OF SPAIN 1546 (161140Z JUN 76), (B) STATE 166653
(061546Z JUL 76), (C) PORT OF SPAIN 1799 (121955Z JUL 76)

1. FOREIGN MINISTER JOSEPH SUMMONED ME TO HIS OFFICE THIS
AFTERNOON AND INFORMED ME THAT THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
CABINET TODAY HAD DECIDED "BECAUSE OF ELECTION OVERTONES"
TO WITHDRAW ITS PREVIOUSLY GRANTED PERMISSION FOR THE
FORTHCOMING VISIT OF UNITED STATES, VENEZUELAN, AND BRAZILIAN
NAVAL UNITS TO TRINIDAD JULY 26-28 IN CONNECTION WITH
UNITAS XVII. HE ADDED THAT THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
COAST GUARD WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE PARTICIPATING IN
ANY NAVAL EXERCISES WITH THE FLEET AS PREVIOUSLY
ENVISAGED.

2. COMMENT: THIS FULFILLS OUR WORST FEARS, BUT WE
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HAD NOT ANTICIPATED LAST-MINUTE CANCELLATION IN VIEW

OF THE MANY EXPRESSIONS OF NON-CONCERN BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS IN RECENT DAYS. COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE DEFENSE FORCE ONLY LAST NIGHT VOLUNTEERED ASSURANCE TO DCM AT FRENCH BASTILLE DAY CELEBRATION THAT THERE WERE NO DIFFICULTIES ANTICIPATED AT THE SCHEDULED CABINET REVIEW OF THE ISSUE TODAY.

3. I HAVE NO REASON TO QUESTION THE JUSTIFICATION GIVEN BY DR. JOSEPH, SINCE THE GOVERNMENT IS QUITE SKITTISH OVER THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. TIMING WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY REMOVED THAT EXPRESSIONS OF GOODWILL CREATED BY FRIENDLY FLEETS AND SHOW BAND WOULD, IN FACT, HAVE CREATED NET POLITICAL PLUS FOR THE GOVERNMENT HERE IN MY VIEW. INFLAMMATORY NEWSPAPER HEADLINE JULY 7, "WAR GAMES IN WI -- TRINIDAD TO JOIN U.S., 7 LATIN COUNTRIES IN MASSIVE EXERCISE" PROBABLY TRIGGERED WITHDRAWAL OF INVITATION. FONMIN JOSEPH HELD NEWSPAPER CLIPPING IN HIS HAND WHILE TALKING TO ME. PRESS STORY SEEMED TO HAVE EXTRAPOLATED FROM WASHINGTON PRESS RELEASE WE HAVE NOT SEEN.

4. HOWEVER, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BOTH FRUITLESS AND DEMEANING FOR US TO APPEAL THE DECISION AT THIS JUNCTURE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS NOT INCLINED TO ENTERTAIN ANY OF MY COMMENTS AFTER HE INFORMED ME TODAY. HE STATED THAT HE WOULD ALSO BE INFORMING THE BRAZILIAN AND VENEZUELAN EMBASSIES TODAY.

5. I PERSONALLY REGRET VERY MUCH THAT WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO WELCOME THE UNITAS FLEET HERE LATE THIS MONTH AND SEND MY SINCERE APOLOGIES TO ADMIRAL SAGERHOLM AND HIS OFFICERS AND MEN. PERVIOUS UNITAS VISITS TO PORT OF SPAIN HAVE BEEN WELL RECEIVED AND I AM CONFIDENT THERE WILL BE MORE SUCH VISITS IN THE FUTURE. FORTUNATELY, NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN TRINIDAD ONLY COME EVERY FIVE YEARS.
FAY

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